

FTA



Chiang Mai academics and business people come together for an enlightening and entertaining seminar on the Fair Trade Agreement

Two U.S. Embassy-sponsored programs in Chiang Mai on June 17 gave Northern Thai business people and academics the chance to question a U.S. expert on the possible effects of the Free Trade Agreement now being negotiated between the U.S. and Thailand. A roundtable discussion entitled "The Benefits of Free Trade: Bringing Your Local Market to the Global Market," hosted by the Consulate and the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce in the morning, drew 80 representatives from throughout the north while an afternoon program at Chiang Mai University's American Corner attracted a university crowd. Scott Hansen (pictured above) moderated the session at the American Corner with Ambassador Michael B. Smith, former U.S. Deputy Trade Representative.

After the morning event, CG Bea Camp reported that "Ambassador Smith warmed up the audience with his straightforward answers and easy-to-grasp examples.

"By explaining how GM's lack of competitiveness made it vulnerable to Toyota's greater efficiency, he showed that the U.S. is committed to open markets even when it causes our own country pain. Similarly, his willingness to criticize U.S. farm subsidies and his characterization of the U.S., EU, and Japan as 'great sinners' in this regard brought appreciative laughter. The presence of the Japanese Consul General made both points all the more enjoyable, while a good turnout from other northern provinces ensured a broad range of views."

Bea reported that "Chiangrai was especially well represented and produced a number of China-oriented questions related to the Thai-China "Early Harvest" agreement. The head of the Chiangrai Economic Quadrangle program told us afterwards: "Whenever you have a program like this, we will come."